

DECISION MEMO

**Upper Brushy Stewardship Project
Commercial Thinning Project
Compartment 32, Stand 16
FY 2009 - 2012
Bankhead Ranger District
National Forests in Alabama
Winston County**

Decision and Rationale

I have decided to commercially thin 30 acres in Compartment 32, Stand 16, located in Section 17, Township 9 South, Range 7 West in the Bankhead National Forest. The project area is located on Forest Service Road 250 in the Moreland Community, south of Grayson. It is within Area 2 of the Forest Health and Restoration Project ([FHRP](#)) for the Bankhead National Forest and Management Prescription 7.E.2, Dispersed Recreation Areas with Vegetation Management, of the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the National Forests in Alabama ([RLRMP](#)).

The purpose of this project is to improve and maintain the health of this stand, reduce the risk of Southern Pine Beetle (SPB) infestation, and to facilitate restoration of native forest communities, specifically fire adapted pine woodlands, as identified in the Forest Health and Restoration Project EIS ([FHRP](#)).

Over the past decade, the Bankhead National Forest has experienced SPB infestations at epidemic levels, primarily in loblolly pine forests. The epidemic peaked in the summer of 2000 and continued at very high levels through 2001. SPB again became active in 2006 - 2008. An estimated 18,600 acres of pine forest have been killed during the epidemic years. The epidemic has resulted in large acres of standing dead trees that are a public safety hazard along trails/roads and these areas have increased forest fuel loads that escalate the risk of resource damaging wildfires in the future.



Compartment 32, Stand 16 – Existing Condition



Example of Expected Result

This action is needed because overstocking in this loblolly pine stand has created an unhealthy stand condition. This condition puts this stand at high risk for attack by SPB. This action will take place during Fiscal Year 2009 - 2012. This action is tiered to the Forest Health and

Restoration Project, National Forests in Alabama, Bankhead National Forest. This stand was inadvertently omitted from the FHRP Environmental Impact Statement ([FHRP EIS](#)) but meets the same criteria that were used in selecting stands for thinning under that project. This stand, in addition to others evaluated in the FHRP EIS, will be part of the Upper Brushy Stewardship Project.

The treatment area is a 21 year old loblolly pine stand. The stand will be thinned to a residual target basal area of 60 ft² per acre. The desired future condition of the stand is shortleaf pine woodlands. Leave trees will be selected from the dominant and codominant crown classes and selection will be based on diameter and species. Species preference will be in the following order, shortleaf pine, longleaf pine, loblolly pine, Virginia pine, hardwood species, including oak species, hickory species, and yellow poplar.

Category

This action is consistent with FSH 1909.15, section 31.2, Category 12, “Harvest of live trees not to exceed 70 acres, requiring no more than ½ mile of temporary road construction”.

- the action includes thinning
- the action will improve habitat for migratory songbirds and eastern wild turkey
- the action will use existing roads

I find that the project is appropriate for the categorical exclusion within these categories because no extraordinary circumstances as defined in FSH 1909.15, Section 30.3 (2) exist.

- *Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat or Forest Service sensitive species.* The project area has been surveyed for threatened, endangered or sensitive species, the biological evaluation ([BE](#)) was completed and the determination was “Not likely to adversely affect” Indiana bat and “no effect” on other T&E species, and concurrence was received by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The determination on the Regional Forester’s sensitive species was “no impact” on these species.
- *Flood plains, wetlands or municipal watersheds.* The project area is not in a flood plain, wetland or municipal watershed.
- *Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas or national recreation areas.* No congressionally designated areas are within the project area.
- *Inventoried roadless areas.* No part of the project area is designated as inventoried roadless area.
- *Research natural areas.* No part of the project area is designated as research natural areas.
- *American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites, archaeological sites or historic properties or areas.* A cultural resource survey of the project area has been conducted. A report was sent to the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). No properties that are eligible or potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places are within the treatment area. Therefore, the proposed thinning will have no impact on significant cultural resources.

Public Involvement and Analysis

Scoping with the public was accomplished on this proposal and the Upper Brushy Stewardship midstory removal project proposal with a notice published in the Northwest Alabamian on May 5, 2007. A letter was mailed to the district mailing list on May 1, 2007.

A legal advertisement establishing formal notice and comment period for this project was published in the Northwest Alabamian on March 4, 2009. Additionally, a letter notifying interested parties of the formal notice and comment period was mailed to the District mailing list on February 26, 2009. One supportive comment was received during the formal notice and comment period.

Findings Required by Other Laws

National Forest Management Act - My decision is based on an analysis of the situation and this area will be treated to promote restoration of shortleaf pine woodlands consistent with the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan of the National Forests in Alabama ([RLRMP](#)), Forest-wide Goals and Objectives (pp 2-1 through 2-10).

Implementation

Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.12(e)(1), this decision is not subject to appeal. Implementation of this decision may begin immediately upon publication of the decision in the paper of record (*Northwest Alabamian*). For further information, contact District Ranger Glen Gaines, Bankhead National Forest, PO Box 278, Double Springs, AL or at (205) 489-5111.

/s/ Charles S. Price

CHARLES S. PRICE

Acting District Ranger

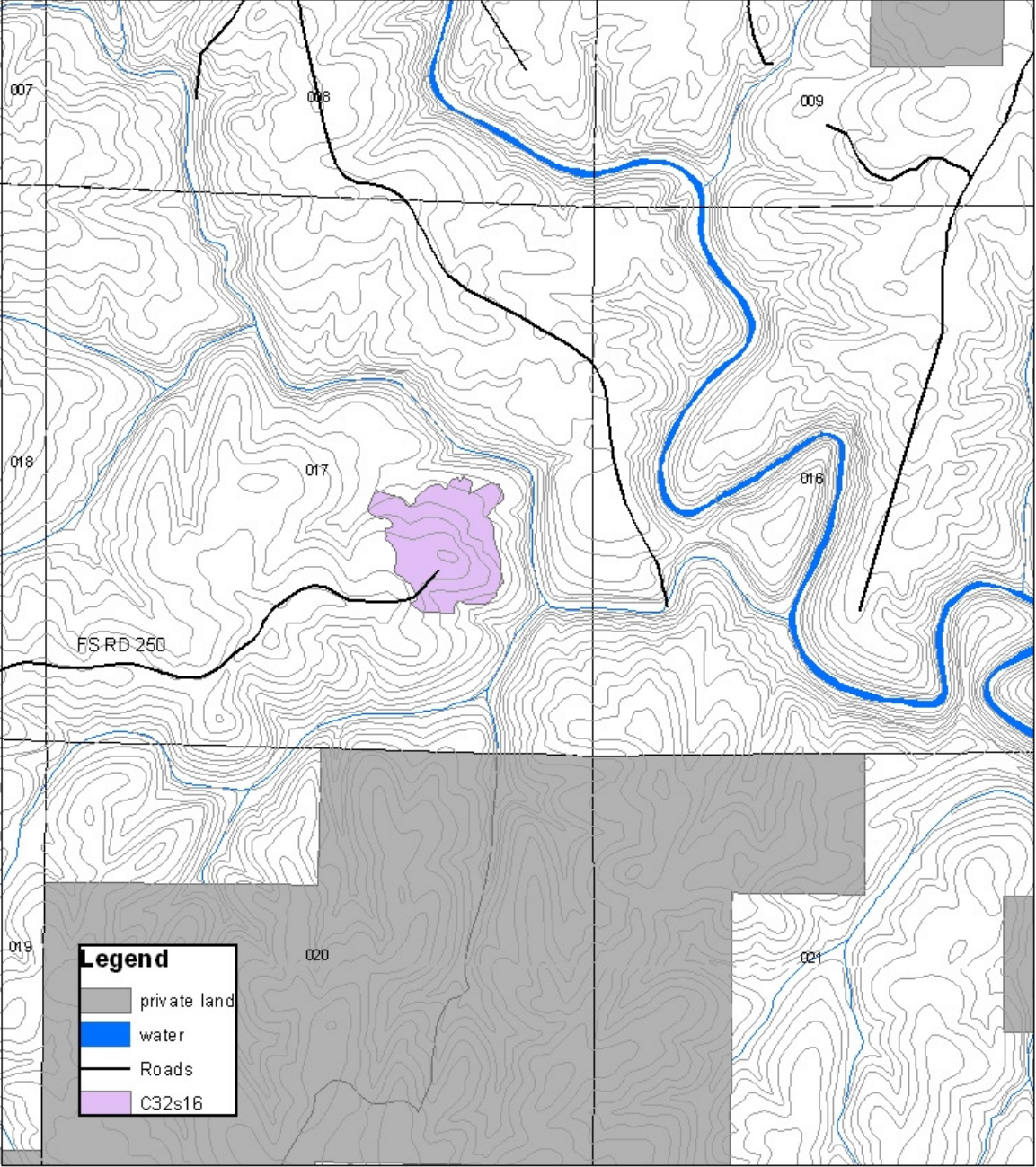
Bankhead National Forest

May 13, 2009

Date

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Bankhead National Forest, Alabama
Upper Brushy Stewardship Project
Thinning - Compartment 32, Stand 16
Treatment Unit Map



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